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MARRYBELL MADURO	ANDERSON BAHAMON	JEAN PAUL	MAILLEYN ALVARADO	MARRYBELL MADURO	MAILLEYN ALVARADO	RICKY THOMAS
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6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.	6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

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Alabama unveils historic $17.5 million investment in wildlife restoration

MONTGOMERY, AL — In a move hailed by conservationists as a "generational win" for the Deep South, Alabama state officials have announced a landmark $17.5 million allocation dedicated to wildlife restoration and habitat preservation for the 2026 fiscal year. The funding, part of a broader push to protect the state's status as one of the most biologically diverse regions in North America, marks the largest single state-level investment in biodiversity in over a decade.

From the tangled river deltas of the Mobile-Tensaw to the rugged Appalachian foothills in the north, Alabama's landscapes are home to a staggering array of species many of which are found nowhere else on Earth. However, habitat loss and environmental shifts have placed increasing pressure on local ecosystems. This new surge of funding aims to reverse those trends by focusing on "boots-on-the-ground" restoration projects.

A sanctuary for the "America's Amazon"

A significant portion of the funds is earmarked for the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, often referred to as "America's Amazon." This vast wetland system is a critical nursery for hundreds of species of fish, birds, and rare reptiles.

"This isn't just about protecting a pretty view," said Dr. Elena Vance, a lead researcher at the Alabama Wildlife Federation. "These wetlands act as natural filters for our water and storm buffers for our communities. By investing $17.5 million today, we are saving billions in ecological services for the next generation."

Planned projects include the reforestation of longleaf pine savannas an ecosystem that once covered the Southeast but has dwindled to a fraction of its original size and the restoration of freshwater mussel populations, which serve as vital "canaries in the coal mine" for water quality.

Economic growth through conservation

Beyond the environmental impact, state leaders are highlighting the economic "ripple effect" of the restoration effort. Alabama's outdoor recreation industry contributes billions to the state economy annually through hunting, fishing, and eco-tourism.

"Our natural heritage is our greatest economic asset," Governor Kay Ivey's office noted in a statement. "By ensuring our woods and waters remain healthy and teeming with life, we are supporting local businesses, from bait shops in the Delta to outfitters in the Tennessee Valley."

The funding will also support the expansion of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), providing more public access for hikers, birdwatchers, and sportsmen. This dual focus on conservation and public recreation is designed to foster a deeper connection between Alabamians and their local environment.

A collaborative future

The initiative is a collaborative effort involving the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), federal partners, and private landowners. A unique "match" program within the bill allows for every state dollar spent to be leveraged against federal conservation grants, effectively doubling the impact of the $17.5 million investment.

For local conservation groups, the announcement is a validation of years of advocacy. The funds will allow for the hiring of additional field biologists and the implementation of advanced satellite monitoring to track the health of endangered species like the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and the Alabama Beach Mouse.

Why it matters now

The timing of the investment is critical. As the state continues to see rapid industrial and residential growth, the window to protect large, contiguous tracts of wilderness is narrowing. By acting now, Alabama is positioning itself as a national leader in balancing economic progress with environmental stewardship.❑

NASA says 'on track' for Artemis 2 launch as soon as April 1

Cape Canaveral, United States

NASA said Thursday that the long-delayed launch of Artemis 2, the first crewed flyby mission to the Moon in more than 50 years, could come as soon as April 1.

"We are on track for a launch as early as April 1, and we are working toward that date," Lori Glaze, a senior NASA official, told a press conference, after technical difficulties delayed a launch originally expected in February.

"It's a test flight, and it is not without risk, but our team and our hardware are ready," she said. "Just keep in mind we still have work" to do.

The US space agency announced in February a sudden revamp of the Artemis program, including the addition of a test mission before an eventual lunar landing.

The first launch window would be Wednesday, April 1, at 6:24 pm (2224 GMT), with several others available in the following days.

"We would anticipate on the order of about four opportunities within that six-day period," Glaze said.

A pair of large liquid natural gas tanks are seen in a parking lot near the Turning Basin at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida, on March 12, 2026.

The Artemis 2 mission is meant to be the first flyby of the Moon in more than half a century.

The rocket will be crewed by three American astronauts mission commander Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch -- and Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen.

After launch, NASA diagrams indicate Artemis 2 will circumnavigate Earth before leaving orbit to travel to the Moon, without landing, for a lunar flyby before returning to Earth and splashing down in the ocean.

"Exactly how close the Artemis II crew will fly to the Moon will depend on when they launch," ranging from 4,000 to 6,000 miles (6,437 to 9,656 km) above the lunar surface, because the Moon will "be in a different spot for each of the possible launch dates."

The first Artemis flew much closer to the Moon -- 80 miles above the surface -- but NASA said Artemis 2 will still go "tens of thousands of miles closer than any human has been in more than 50 years."

"At this distance the Moon will appear to the crew to be about the size of a basketball held at arm's length."

The mission is to be followed by Artemis 3 with the goal of "rendezvous in low-Earth orbit" of at least one lunar lander.❑

Wild horse adoptions reach historic milestone: A new chapter for an American icon

Across the vast, rugged expanses of the American West, the thunder of hooves has long been the soundtrack of the frontier. But as populations of wild horses and burros have surged in recent years, the delicate balance of the rangeland has faced unprecedented pressure.

This week, however, federal officials and conservationists are celebrating a major victory for both the animals and the land: the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) officially surpassed 290,000 successful adoptions, marking a historic milestone in one of the nation's most complex wildlife management efforts.

For decades, the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 has protected these animals as "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West." Yet, with no natural predators and a population that can double every four years, the herds frequently outgrow the "Appropriate Management Level" of the land. This leads to overgrazing, which threatens not only the horses themselves with starvation but also the habitat of other native species like sage-grouse and elk.

The milestone of 290,000 adoptions represents a shift in strategy that prioritizes the transition of these animals from public rangelands to private homes.

From the range to the ranch

The success of the program is largely credited to the Adoption Incentive Program (AIP), which was designed to help offset the costs of gentling and caring for a wild horse.

Under the program, qualified adopters can receive up to $1,000 after one year of successful care, at which point the title for the animal is officially transferred to the individual.

"It's more than just a numbers game," says Sarah Miller, a veteran horse trainer who has worked with over a dozen mustangs. "When you take a horse that has never known a human touch and you build that bond of trust, you aren't just saving an animal—you're gaining a partner that is hardier and more loyal than almost any domestic breed."

The surge in adoptions has been bolstered by a growing "Mustang Culture" in the United States. Competitive events like the "Extreme Mustang Makeover," where trainers have 100 days to tame a wild horse for showcase and auction, have gone viral on social media, showcasing the incredible versatility of the breed. From trail riding and ranch work to high-level dressage and jumping, the American Mustang is proving it can do it all.

The path ahead

Despite the celebration, challenges remain. Currently, nearly 60,000 horses and burros still reside in off-range corrals and pastures, supported by federal funding. The cost of maintaining these animals is a significant portion of the BLM's budget, which is why the push for private adoptions is more critical than ever.

Conservationists argue that increasing adoption rates is the most humane and sustainable way to manage the population. By moving animals into private care, the BLM can reduce the density of herds on the range, allowing the land to recover from years of over-utilization and ensuring that the remaining wild herds have enough water and forage to thrive.

A symbol reborn

As the 290,000th animal settles into its new home this month, the program serves as a reminder of the enduring connection between Americans and the wild. These horses, descendants of those brought by Spanish explorers centuries ago, are no longer just figures on a distant horizon; they are becoming part of the American family.

For those involved in the program, the milestone is a moment of profound hope. It proves that through innovation, community engagement, and a deep respect for nature, it is possible to preserve the icons of our past while protecting the health of our future.

"Every time a trailer pulls away with a horse headed for its forever home," says Miller, "the West gets a little bit smaller, and our hearts get a little bit bigger."❑

Mexico becomes first in nation to guarantee no-cost care for all families

SANTA FE - In a move that has sent ripples across the national political landscape, New Mexico has officially become the first state in the union to offer universal, no-cost childcare to nearly all its residents. The initiative, signed into law this week, effectively treats early childhood education as a public right, similar to the K-12 school system.

Under the new "Universal Child Care" (UCC) framework, the state has eliminated traditional income eligibility "cliffs." Previously, families who received a modest raise at work often found themselves disqualified from subsidies, leaving them with childcare bills that outpaced their earnings. Now, the state will cover the full cost of care at licensed providers for families across the economic spectrum.

"This is a transformation of our social contract," Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham said during a press conference at a local community center. "We are telling every parent in New Mexico that your ability to go to work or finish your degree should not be dictated by the crushing cost of daycare."

The program's engine is the Early Childhood Trust Fund, which has swelled to an unprecedented $11 billion. This war chest is fueled by the state's record-breaking oil and natural gas revenues. By pivoting these resources toward the youngest New Mexicans, the state expects to save the average family approximately $1,000 per month per child.

Economists are already signaling that the move could be a massive boon for the local workforce. By removing the financial barrier to care, thousands of parents—predominantly mothers—who were previously sidelined by high costs are expected to re-enter the labor market.

To meet the anticipated surge in demand, the state is also pouring $12.7 million into a low-interest loan fund to help providers expand their facilities. Furthermore, the policy includes a "wage floor" incentive, offering higher reimbursement rates to centers that pay their staff a minimum of $18 per hour, addressing the chronic labor shortages that have long plagued the industry.

New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham delivers a speech during the COP30 UN Climate Change Conference, in Belem, Para State, Brazil on November 11, 2025.

While some fiscal hawks have questioned the long-term volatility of relying on energy revenues, the law includes "guardrail" provisions to adjust co-pays if the trust fund dips below certain levels. For now, however, New Mexico stands as a solitary beacon of what is possible when a state prioritizes its smallest citizens.

"We aren't just helping families get by," the Governor added. "We're building the workforce of 2045."❑

One surprise after another? Oscars night set to be unpredictable

Hollywood, United States
With "Sinners" and "One Battle After Another" neck-and-neck for best picture and several acting races far too close to call, this Sunday's Oscars gala is shaping up to be the most unpredictable in years.
A Hollywood ceremony set to feature music from "KPop Demon Hunters" and Conan O'Brien as host will feature several nail-biting reveals, culminating in the announcement of the year's best film, which remains anyone's guess.
Until "the final envelope is opened for best picture, we're not going to know who's going to win," said Variety's awards columnist Clayton Davis.
"Both have a huge opportunity in order to break multiple Oscar records," he told AFP.

A decorative replica Oscar statue covered in protective plastic sheeting is seen as preparations are made on the red carpet arrivals area ahead of the 98th Annual Academy Awards in Hollywood, California, on March 13, 2026.

"Sinners," a smash-hit vampire period horror film from director Ryan Coogler, has already made Academy Awards history with its whopping 16 nominations.
The blues-inflected race allegory has a chance to chase down the most Oscar wins by a single movie, shared at 11 between "Ben-Hur," "Titanic" and "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King."
Coogler, previously best known for "Black Panther," could become the first ever Black person to win best director, in the 98 years of Oscars history.
"He's only the seventh ever nominated," noted Davis, who spoke to many Oscars voters and says "the love for Coogler is undeniable."
But the frontrunner of this awards season has long been "One Battle," a zany thriller about a retired revolutionary looking for his teen daughter.
Set against a wild backdrop of radical violence, immigration raids and white supremacists, it earned 13 nods and could also break the overall wins record.
Its director Paul Thomas Anderson is one of the greatest auteurs of 21st century US cinema, but has never won any of his 11 previous nominations for films including "There Will Be Blood" and "Boogie Nights."
Though "Sinners" was the bigger commercial hit, the exciting race between two "popular movies that people will know at home" should be good for ratings, Davis predicted.

- 'Steamroller' -
While suspense about best picture doesn't happen every year, what is truly unusual this time is the amount of uncertainty surrounding the acting prizes.
A year after narrowly losing best actor honors with his uncanny Bob Dylan portrayal in "A Complete Unknown," Timothee Chalamet had long appeared a lock for his pushy ping-pong player "Marty Supreme."
But a series of ill-advised comments, most recently dismissing ballet and opera as art forms that "no one cares about," have seen the 30-year-old golden boy's chances plummet.
"Sinners" star Michael B Jordan, who plays two roles as twin brothers, won the important Screen Actors Guild's Actor Award this month, just before Oscars voting closed.
"This is a movie star performance that we don't get very often... he's really two steps away from the finish line," said Davis, who also does not rule out Leonardo DiCaprio ("One Battle") or Ethan Hawke ("Blue Moon").
The supporting acting prizes are also up for grabs.
Sean Penn could win a third acting Oscar for his comic yet terrifying soldier in "One Battle."
But he is up against international arthouse favorite Stellan Skarsgard ("Sentimental Value") and veteran Delroy Lindo, earning his first Oscar nod at 73 for "Sinners."
Supporting actress could see a rare horror villain role rewarded for Amy Madigan in "Weapons," or go to "One Battle" revolutionary Teyana Taylor or "Sinners" Hoodoo healer Wunmi Mosaku.
The only sure thing appears to be Jessie Buckley, who plays William Shakespeare's wife in "Hamnet."
"It's been the steamroller all season. That's the one thing you could take to the bank," said Davis.

- KPop, Redford tributes -
Best international film is arguably the hardest to call of all, with Norwegian family drama "Sentimental Value" up against Brazil's surreal political thriller "The Secret Agent."
O'Brien returns to host the Oscars for a second year running, while Barbra Streisand is rumored to be singing a tribute to her "The Way We Were" co-star Robert Redford, who died in September.
Ejae, Audrey Nuna and Rei Ami, the singing voices behind "KPop Demon Hunters" fictional girl group HUNTR/X, will perform the Netflix smash film's Oscar-nominated song "Golden."
The Oscars will air live on ABC and Hulu from 4:00 pm in Los Angeles (2300 GMT). ❑

Pink Floyd guitar 'Black Strat' sells at auction for record $14.6 mn

Musical Instruments Private Sales Consultant for Christie's, Kerry Keane hangs the Fender Stratocaster known as "The Black Strat", part of The David Gilmour Guitar Collection, during a press preview at Christie's on June 14, 2019 in New York City.

New York, United States
A guitar used by Pink Floyd's David Gilmour on some of the British progressive rock band's best-loved albums has sold for a record $14.6 million, auction house Christie's said.
The price of the Fender Stratocaster nicknamed "Black Strat" far surpassed that of the previous record holder, a guitar owned by Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain that sold for $6 million in 2020.
Gilmour played Black Strat on every Pink Floyd album between 1970 and 1983, including "Dark Side of the Moon," "Wish You Were Here," "Animals" and "The Wall."
Christie's did not provide the name of the buyer, who prevailed after 21 minutes of bidding.
The auction Thursday in New York featured rock memorabilia from the collection of Jim Irsay, the former owner of the Indianapolis Colts NFL team, who died in 2025.
Other guitars sold at the auction included a custom-made instrument that belonged to Jerry Garcia, co-founder of psychedelic rockers the Grateful Dead, which sold for $11.6 million, Christie's said.
A blue Fender Mustang belonging to Cobain that featured in the music video of Nirvana's 1990s grunge anthem "Smells Like Teen Spirit" sold for $6.9 million.❑

'We're not wombs': Japan women seek rights to sterilization

Tokyo, Japan

When Kazane Kajiya voluntarily sterilized herself in the United States aged 27, she essentially "flipped the middle finger" at Japan's patriarchal society that had long pushed her towards motherhood.

In the rapidly ageing country desperate to boost its falling birth rates, women seeking to make themselves infertile were assumed "not even to exist", Kajiya, who has never wanted children, told AFP.

She and four other women are now challenging the constitutionality of Japan's decades-old "maternity protection" law, one of the world's most restrictive barriers to sterilization.

A verdict in their landmark lawsuit dubbed "maternity is not my body's purpose" is due next week.

Under the law, a woman must have multiple children with her health at risk, or face life-threatening danger from pregnancy, to qualify for sterilization. Even then, spousal consent is required.

This bans physicians from operating on healthy, childless women like Kajiya, now 29, who flew to the US to have her fallopian tubes removed in what she described as a minimally invasive procedure.

It was her "ultimate no" to being treated as a "future incubator".

To her, the law signals the government is "dead-set against giving freedom to end reproductive capacity to women who haven't fulfilled their 'duties' to bear multiple children for the sake of the nation".

This picture taken on March 1, 2026 shows Kazane Kajiya, 29, posing for a photo after an interview with AFP in Yokohama.

Growing up, she was told her uterine lining represented the "bed for a baby" and that period pain was preparation for labour.

"I felt like I had been shoved onto a train bound for motherhood," she recalled.

By having the surgery, "I smashed the windows, and hurled myself out of that train.

"We're not wombs, we're humans."

- Japan as an 'outlier' -

A holdover from a wartime era where women were considered resources for population growth, the law effectively "manages all fertile women as potential maternal bodies", Michiko Kameishi, lead lawyer for the case, told AFP.

Its spousal consent requirement suggests "women are not seen as independent beings capable of self-determination".

The lawyer aims to establish women have constitutionally guaranteed rights to bodily freedom, placing sterilisation on par with plastic surgery or tattooing.

Kajiya once wondered if discomfort with being female explained her feelings but dismissed that "because I hate beards and like pretty clothes", she said.

She even came to terms with menstruation.

What she truly loathes, she concluded, is her biological capacity to reproduce.

That innate aversion to fertility, the pressure on women to give birth and the desire for safe, effective contraception have united the plaintiffs.

Among modern democracies, Japan is an outlier on sterilization access.

The lawsuit cites a 2002 study by EngenderHealth, a global NGO focused on sexual and reproductive health, that says more than 70 countries including many industrialised economies explicitly permitted the procedure as a method of contraception.

Japan was among eight countries that forbade or severely restricted it.

In Japan, condoms a male-controlled method is the most popular form of birth control.

Just 0.5 percent of women choose sterilization and 2.7 percent use the contraceptive pill, seen as costly, according to one survey.

Contraceptive injections and implants remain unavailable.

And while men's vasectomies similarly require spousal consent, enforcement tends to be laxer with urology clinics openly touting the procedure, campaigners say.

The government, meanwhile, has defended the current system as protecting women from "future regret".

Given the "irreversible" nature of sterilization, existing restrictions "help guarantee those considering surgery rights to self-determination over whether they want to have children", the government said in a document filed with Tokyo District Court.

- Myths, guilt -

These restrictions have historically sparked little debate even among feminists who have strenuously opposed Japan's spousal consent requirement for abortions.

That's because few want to speak out in a society where "the myth persists that women are incomplete without motherhood", lawyer Kameishi said.❑

This handout photo released and taken by the Police in Berlin on March 13, 2026 shows a wild boar strolling around in a supermarket in the city's southwestern district of Koepenick.

Police chase boar living high on the hog in Berlin mall

Berlin, Germany

A wild boar wandered into a Berlin shopping mall's home decor shop on Friday, sparking a police response that drew in officers and veterinarians equipped with an anaesthetic gun, wooden shields and even a blowgun but ended peacefully.

Police said they were alerted to the porcine intruder around 9 am (0800 GMT) when it slipped through sliding glass doors into the mall and started rummaging through the aisles, as staff quickly vacated the shop.

Berlin's Tierpark zoo told AFP it deployed a team to the scene in the southeastern Koepenick district but quickly assessed "that sedating the animal was not possible due to the layout of the premises".

Police said officers and the zoo team eventually decided it was best to drive the boar out by "constructing a path using wooden pallets", adding that "the wild boar then returned to the forest, which we assume it came from".

It was not the first time a wild boar has roamed built-up areas of the German capital, which is surrounded by woods. In mid-2023, a wild boar prowling the streets of southwestern Berlin sparked panic after it was briefly mistaken for a lioness.❑

With new ships, Canada aims to be 'icebreaking superpower'

North Vancouver, Canada

At a massive shipyard in North Vancouver, Canadian workers grind metal beams for a powerful new icebreaker crucial to cementing the country's presence in the increasingly contested Arctic.

Icebreakers are specialized, expensive vessels able to navigate in the frozen far north.

And "this is the crown jewel," Eddie Schehr, vice president of production at the Seaspan shipyard, told AFP.

For Prime Minister Mark Carney, who heads to Norway on Friday to observe Arctic defense drills involving troops from 14 NATO states, Canada's extreme north has emerged as a strategic priority.

"Canada is, and forever will be, an Arctic nation," he said ahead of the trip.

During a stop in Canada's Northwest Territories before flying to Norway, Carney announced nearly CAN$35 billion ($25.7 billion) in Arctic funding, with most of the funds dedicated to upgrading existing military infrastructure.

"We cannot rely on other nations for our security," he said. "We are securing every corner of this terrain."

Concerns about Russian aggression, especially after the invasion of Ukraine, have focused attention on the Arctic, where territorial sovereignty is disputed in several areas.

Seaspan Shipyards is seen in North Vancouver, British Columbia, on February 13, 2026.

Climate change is intensifying competition, with previously inaccessible minerals increasingly available for exploitation as the ice thaws and new shipping routes open.

For Wesley Wark, a national security expert at the Center for International Governance Innovation, icebreaker fleets are a key part of the defense innovation required to safeguard Canada's position.

"We're in the business of trying to reassert ourselves as an icebreaking superpower," he told AFP.

- 'Crown jewel' -

Two new ships are under construction, each costing more than CAN$3 billion.

One, partly being built in Finland, is due for delivery in 2030.

The other vessel, set to be ready in 2032, is being made at the Seaspan shipyards in North Vancouver.

Senior vice president Dave Hargreaves said Canada's existing icebreaking fleet is "getting old."

And this ship, he said, "gives Canada the ability to have a strong presence in the Arctic, which is where you start."

Canada's decision to upgrade its icebreaker fleet preceded US President Donald Trump's return to office.

But Carney has delivered stark warnings about new risks from United States since entering Canadian politics last year, including a claim from last year's federal election campaign that Trump wanted to "break us so America can own us."

Wark told AFP that Canada's challenge in the Arctic has two main planks.

First, Carney's government wants "to show that it's a strong NATO partner and to take part in NATO collective security," he said, adding that NATO is "deeply concerned about Russian activities in the Arctic."

Russia has the world's largest icebreaker fleet by far Canada is a distant second and Wark said Carney wants to signal both to a domestic audience and allies that Canada can defend NATO's "Arctic flank."

- 'Hard power capacity' -

Canada must also consider that "the United States itself potentially represents a danger to Canadian security," Wark said.

Trump has discussed annexing Canada at various points in his second term. He again mocked Carney as the "governor" of a US state this week, renewing a taunt he first levelled at former prime minister Justin Trudeau.

Wark maintains the chance of direct military confrontation with the United States is low.

The more immediate risk is that Washington may conclude Canada is incapable of defending the Arctic, compelling the US military to take charge, he said.❑

Baboon siblings get jealous just like human kids: scientists

Paris, France

Sibling rivalry isn't just a problem for humans young baboons also compete for their mother's attention, scientists said on Wednesday.

The scenario is familiar for many parents: just when they finally get to share a special moment with one of their children, a little brother or sister pops up trying to get noticed.

Axelle Delaunay, an evolutionary biologist at Finland's University of Turku and lead author of a new study, told AFP that jealousy is a "very striking" emotion in humans.

However, it has been little studied among our fellow primates because jealousy is "very complicated to measure", she said.

Female primates usually only have one baby at a time, so "it was generally thought there was no real competition between siblings, because brothers and sisters are different ages and do not necessarily need their mother and her resources at the same time", Delaunay explained.

For the study, a team of researchers observed two troops of wild chacma baboons in Tsaobis Nature Park in central Namibia between August and December 2021.

There were 16 families living in the troops, with a total of 49 young siblings.

Anubis Baboons eat in their enclosure at the French CNRS' (National Centre for Scientific Research) primatology centre where various monkey species are raised for the entire French scientific community in Rousset, south-eastern France, on November 6, 2025.

Baboons live in societies ruled by women, with the position of power handed down from mother to daughter. Males, meanwhile, leave after puberty.

Like humans, baboon infants have a long developmental period during which they maintain strong bonds with their mother.

The mothers often groom their children and have been known to play favourites.

So the scientists spent lots of time watching baboon mothers either resting or grooming their children.

They meticulously noted when another infant interfered with a mother's grooming by biting, slapping, crying out or more gently asking for affection.

What they observed "strikingly mirrors patterns of sibling jealousy reported in humans", according to the study published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences.❑

Aruba's neighborhoods; the meaning behind their names; Ayo & Alto Vista

(Oranjestad)—Just like any other country, Aruba has unique and beautifully named neighborhoods that all form a part of its culture and development. Many of these names have a historical background and meaning that teaches us about the island and its rich culture every day.

With this series, we want to take you on a journey of discovery, where you'll learn not only the beautiful names but the history behind it that gives it life and meaning.

Ayo

Ajo, or Ayo, is a word with Arawak-Indian origin. A (or Ha) is an Indo-Antillean generalizing word. If you were to change a part of the word "Ayo", namely 'Yo', to 'Yu' and make 'Ayu', it would mean "white."

However, as we now know, the name of the neighborhood is 'Ayo'. The word 'Yo' stands for Yocahu, which is another word for 'creator' in Arawak/Taino and in the Papiamento spoken today, 'Ayo' means 'bye'.

At Ayo, you can find some of the most well known rock formations. These formations became a well loved and visited attraction at Aruba that is held in high regards by both tourists and locals alike.

If you'd like to know more about the rock formations at Ayo, stay tuned for our article where we tell you all about its location and history.

This neighborhood's abbreviation is; A.

Alto Vista

This word combination can be roughly translated to a 'high point of view' and the neighborhood received this name from the Hill.

In the surrounding areas, Domingo Antonia Silvestre built his by his own means the very first chapel or church of Aruba. The walls of this church were made with rocks but the roof was made of dry corn stalks. The church was inaugurated by father Pablo Algemesi.

If you'd like to know more about the Alto Vista Church's beautiful history, stay tuned for our article where we tell you all you need to know about it for when you visit it.

This neighborhood's abbreviation is; AV.

Up for a snorkeling adventure in Aruba? Top 3 shipwrecks to explore

(ORANJESTAD) – Aruba is not only the perfect vacation destination to sit back and relax on the sandy beaches but also has great snorkeling spots for passionate adventurers to explore. On the coast of the island, there are various shipwrecks that have become fan-favorites over the years. Here are the top 3 shipwrecks you should explore.

SS Antilla

Dubbed "The Ghost Ship", SS Antilla is the biggest and most visited shipwreck site off the coast of the island. Located in Malmok, this 400-foot ship's story is one of capture and sabotage during WWII.

After Germany invaded The Netherlands, Dutch authorities ordered the confinement of the ship's German crew, who were ported in Aruba because it needed to find a neutral port.The Dutch ordered the ship to be confiscated, but the German crew had other plans. Taking advantage of a delay caused by an anticipated armed resistance, the Germans

started scuttling the ship, opening her seacock and setting her ablaze.

Eventually, the crew was arrested, but SS Antilla could not be saved by the Dutch forces. The Dutch fired two rounds of their 35mm gun aboard the 'Aruba' at SS Antilla and left her to sink.

The shipwreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you'll be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the shipwreck alone is already impressive enough.

SS Pedernales

Like the Antilla, the story of SS Pedernales dates to WWII. Pedernales was used as a lake tanker between Venezuela and Aruba, and sailed under British Flag. At this time, The US and Britain were using Aruba and Curacao as fuel stations for the war ships.

Under operation Neuland (disruption of British and American oil sources), Germany fleets bombed Pedernales. The ship was later cut into three sections, two of which were taken to the US for reconstruction. The remaining part stayed in Aruba and was used as target practice. Eventually, the ship became a snorkeling site that has attracted many visitors throughout the years.

Pedernales lies on the north-west coast of Aruba, and is no more than 10 feet under water, making it an ideal site for snorkelers and divers of all levels.

Jane Sea Wreck

The Jane Sea Wreck lies near Palm Island at 100 feet underwater. Jane's story is heavily speculated, making her origin a tale of legends.

Launched in 1959, the 190-feet ship was initially called "Blackthorn". Her last owner, S&D Shipping Ltd. named her Jane Sea. Jane was a cement freighter between Venezuela and Aruba.

The story goes that the Jane Sea arrived one day at the Barcadera Harbor, where Aruban customs discovered several tons of cocaine. The ship was confiscated and petitioned went out for her owner to claim her. However, several years went by and no one came forward to claim the ship, so dive operators decided to sink her as an artificial reef. This happened in 1988.

Jane Sea earned the nick name Jane C, because of the illicit white powder discovered on board.

Jane is now beautifully overgrown with coral and is home to a diverse set of marine life, like turtles, octopus, crabs and sometimes even nurse sharks.

The stories behind these shipwrecks enriches their exploration and offers snorkelers and divers a glance into the past, as well as the beautiful marine life that have molded these wrecks into their home. So, grab your equipment and discover another side of what Aruba has to offer!

We highly recommend you embark on your adventure with the guide of a professional and be sure to take of yourself and Aruba's precious nature.

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A brief history of the California Light House

(Oranjestad)—At the furthest western point of the island, there lies the tallest structure on the island: The California Light House. Standing on top of a limestone cliff, this lighthouse oversees the entire island, offering one of few best views of the island and the surrounding sea. It is also one of the few monuments that hold a rich history.

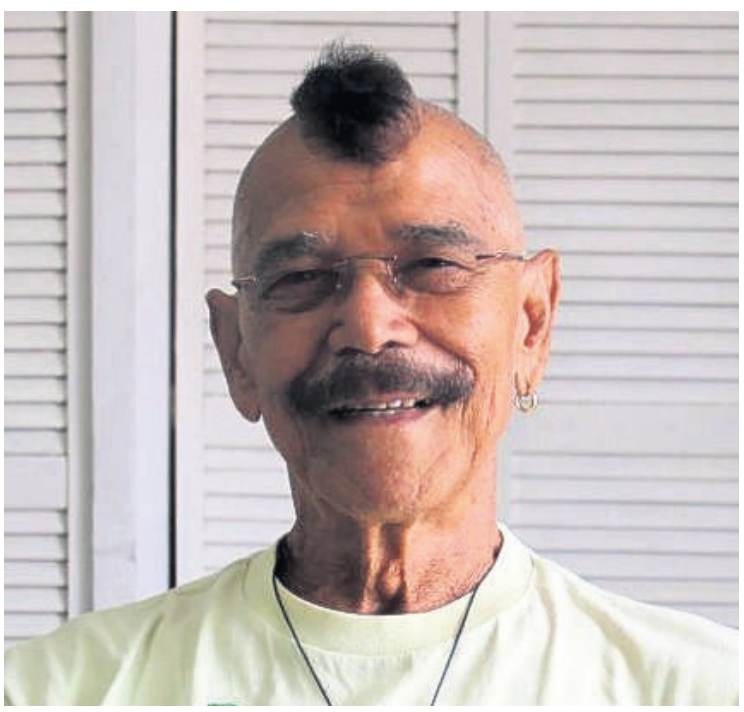
The lighthouse was constructed in between 1914-1916, and its first keeper was a young trained lighthouse keeper from Curacao names Jacob Jacobs. Mr. Frederico Fingal was the last man to have occupied this position until 1962. Though his son, Mr. Romulo Fingal did not continue in his father's footsteps, he does have a special connection to the lighthouse. He sat down with our reporter and shared a bit of its history.

As Mr. Fingal explains, "In 1915, cargo donkeys were hired from Figaroa di Noord to help build the Lighthouse at Westpunt. The donkeys had to walk along the beach all the way to Westpunt carrying the cargo, poles, cement, and all these things. At that time, it was a difficult task until Aruba got its first truck.

These things reflect how people could have accomplished this tremendous job with so little." Mr. Fingal said, "At that time, it wasn't a place for people to work. It was very challenging because it was full of goats and donkeys, and it was very isolated. There were no hotels or roads to get there. There was only a donkey trail. Those were the only means of transportation."

Mr. Fingal continues, "In 1939, I was born in the lighthouse, and my father was the last lighthouse keeper until he retired in 1962. After that, they removed the power cables all the way to the top. According to the story, we couldn't have the light ourselves because they dismantled it, and after many years, I heard that it is in a train museum in San Nicolas, where we found this very special lens that, when the light shines through it, it reaches 30 kilometers out to sea." Mr. Fingal told our reporter.

The lighthouse has a long and very interesting history. The reason why the lighthouse was built, according to Mr. Fingal, dates back to the day when the cargo ship S.S. California sank because of the lack of light. In 1913, Aruba made a request to Curacao to build a Lighthouse at Westpunt, and the governor of Curacao responded to Aruba to come back in 1915 with a well-detailed plan. "During the First World War from 1914 to 1918, they had to wait for the light to be transported to Aruba because it was manufactured in France. At that time, there was no electricity, and the light was very interesting because it rotated with a kerosene lamp that planes used; clean kerosene," Mr. Fingal said.



Mr. Fingal discovered something very interesting about the lighthouse after much research was documented in his book 'History of the Lighthouse at Westpunt.' He found many details: "I found out that the height of the lighthouse

was due to the absence of electricity. There was also the presence of coral. There is a long steel cable from where the light is, and under the light, at the highest point, there is a hanging weight, a sort of pendulum that swings like that, with a weight that measures about 1 meter by 30 centimeters wide, which is a block of solid iron attached to a cable. When you release it upwards, it comes down, and the weight that comes down pulls it up, gradually. And while it comes down, the same weight that is descending causes many small wheels to turn in the opposite direction. The Lighthouse rotates from 6 pm in the evening, when the sun sets, until 6 am in the morning. During the entire night, the light shines on the lantern, it goes down 24 meters, and the Lighthouse is 30 meters high. It is designed not to collapse," Mr. Fingal explains.

Mr. Fingal further explains that in one night, the lighthouse rotates 4,320 times and consumes one gallon of kerosene for the whole operation. "At that time, the kerosene was supplied from the Lago refinery. Every day it was brought down, and to start the light again, they had to lift the weight up, so our job as children was to crank it and raise the weight back up in the evening when the light stuck, they would take it down again, and the light stayed down. That's how it worked for a very long time," Mr. Fingal explains.

Thanks to the Monument Fund Aruba, which worked hard and is currently in charge of the Lighthouse, Mr. Fingal is very happy with its preservation, along with all the renovations that have taken place. He hopes that the story of the lighthouse will continue to live on for future generations.

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Aruba to me: "The gem of the ocean, a bright shining star!"

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ……. Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory.

Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive?

Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.
Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page!

Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Glenn and Sandy Olson from
They wrote to us saying:
Aruba to us is

A time for family, a time for fun.
A place to enjoy ourselves in the sun.
Where the beaches are soft, the sand so white.
The beautiful blue water and the sky so bright.
Where the people are friendly, warm and kind.
No one more gracious in the world you'll find.
When we return each year we feel so blessed.
Our stay on Aruba is simply the best.
Your generous nature is one to behold.
Our visits each year never grow old.
Thank you, Aruba, for all that you are.
The gem of the ocean, a bright shining star!

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers!

Feeling parched? Grab refreshment by the side of the road!

(Oranjestad)—Touring the island in the blistering heat can leave one feeling rather thirsty and looking to cool off. Luckily there are a few stands along the roads of Aruba that can offer you just what you need: a nice, refreshing beverage!

These "coconut stands" can be found at several locations on the island, where you can cool off with delicious smoothies, drinks, snacks, and of course, fresh coconuts! Perfect during family outings around the island, these stands can be found in the following locations:

- Near the red Anchor in San Nicolas
- On the Linear Park in Oranjestad (in front of airport runway)
- At the California Light House hill
- Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins

Tern season has arrived, and ACF is calling for their protection

(ORANJESTAD)—Aruba has begun to see terns arriving along its coast to start their breeding season once again. An event that happens every year, the migration of terns to our island normally begins in March, but this year it was observed that they were already present as early as January.

In Aruba, there are ten different species of terns that normally breed from March to September every year. However, ACF has noted that this year their arrival came earlier, and by the end of January a presence of terns was already being seen in their breeding areas. During this season, ten different species breed at different times. This is the reason why the season lasts for more than half a year.

The terns breed mainly in the Baby Beach area and along the north coast of Aruba. Baby Beach is a particularly special site for terns, since this is where they carry out their reproduction rituals. Referred to as a "discotheque" by Natasha Silva, the point of Baby Beach near the open water is where a large group of terns spends the season searching for their partner—for life—to reproduce.

Terns are very fragile and easily disturbed, especially during their reproduction rituals. Their nests are divided into two specific sites on our island. The first is the reefs near the refinery in San Nicolas. These reefs become home to the terns, where they lay their nests either on the sand or in the small bushes around the reefs. These reefs are "off-limits" to the public; one of the only areas in Aruba that is completely protected by law.

The terns also lay eggs along the north coast of our island, between cliffs and rocks throughout the area. This is where they are vulnerable to greater danger, according to ACF. Among these cliffs, everything is well camouflaged and cannot easily be seen, even by people who are walking or driving vehicles over the rocks.

The chicks have a natural behavior to "freeze" in place when they sense danger. This puts them at risk of being stepped on. For this reason, ACF is making a call to the community and authorities to help protect our historic birds.

As general advice, ACF says to keep distance and be cautious when passing through areas where terns are breeding. "If a tern starts screaming at you, that is a sign that you are too close to their nest and eggs," Silva explained. These are the types of signals the Aruba community needs to be aware of.

So once again, a call goes out to the entire community of Aruba: Let's protect our terns during an important season for them. Educate yourself and others about the birds, stay alert to harmful activities near nests, and share information with ACF if you notice anything unusual in nature. Together we can care for and strengthen our nature, and that begins with education.

Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF) can be reached by phone at 585-1234 or by email at info@acf.aw

A guide for the perfect picture: Where to find the most Instagrammable places in Aruba

(Oranjestad)—Imagine, you're out and about on the island and you want to take the most picture-perfect photo to show your friends and family back home and online. It seems like the perfect spot can be hard to find, but Aruba is full of great spots for a quick snapshot! Here are the most Instagrammable places in Aruba.

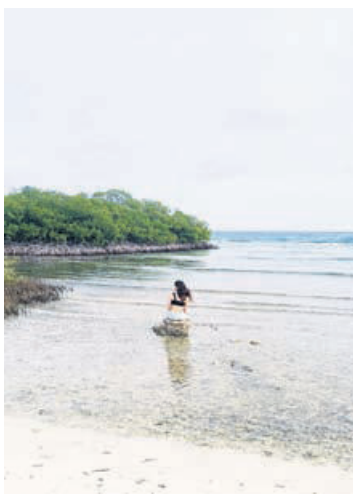
Wooden Swing on Plaza Daniel Leo

While you're in Mainstreet Oranjestad, check out the wooden swing on Plaza Daniel Leo. This is another favorite among visitors wanting a cute snapshot for Instagram.

Since you've made it this far, one question: How many blue horses have you spotted already?

Mangel Halto

For a different take on beach photos, we definitely recommend Mangel Halto! You can get in the water right by the roots of these beautiful trees (please be careful not to climb them, though!). You will see beautiful skies, birds and other wildlife, and among the greenery of the mangroves, your picture is sure to pop!



Yacht Dock in Oranjestad

Last but certainly not least, the Yacht Dock in Oranjestad is the perfect spot to take a beautiful picture, especially at sunset. The dock is located behind the Wilhelmina Park. This spot offers a gorgeous view of the ocean and sunset, accompanied by the soft waves crashing on the shoreline. You may even spot some iguanas!

"I LOVE ARUBA"

While you're in the area, check out the 'I LOVE ARUBA' sign is a great first stop for a quick shot with the family. This spot is among the few that has become a favorite among tourists, especially those that are visiting Aruba through a cruise vacation.

Speaking of giant signs that read "Aruba" (because there can never be too many), there is another sign you can find along the Linear Park. It may be a long walk from the harbor to get there, but while you're at it, check out these other spots along the way!

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If you encounter any problems, we are here to help: news@arubatoday.com

Food culture in Aruba

(Oranjestad) – Like many other cultures, an important aspect of the Aruban cultural identity is our connection to food and food traditions. The local food traditions consist of a melting pot of different cultural and religious eating habits and dishes.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner
The routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner on the island is one that does not completely follow a European or American routine, despite the major influences from these parts of the world on our culture and way of living. When it comes to the three important meals of the day, most of the Aruban population follows a Latin-American influenced routine.

Breakfast
Breakfast in Aruba is quite simple: a cup of coffee or tea, some bread, and sometimes an egg. Sometimes, due to the need of a quick "to-go" breakfast, you may also find many snack trucks and cafes that sell sandwiches, pastechis (meat pie), arepas and empanadas early in the morning.

Main Meal
The main meal is typically eaten in most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can are largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands* include sopi bonch'i rabo (red kidney bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondongo (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

Dinner Time
Dinner time can vary significantly from household to household. Unlike the U.S. or in Europe, dinner time typically does not consist of a whole (warm) meal. Instead, the evening

"meal" can typically consist of something lighter, like a sandwich, though it is not uncommon to see leftovers from the main meal reheated and eaten again. Tea and coffee are often also served with the evening snack.

(Religious) Holidays
Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences, most notably form Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous pan di ham* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and homemade fruit punch. Desserts include bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesillo (flan), bolo preto (fruit cake), drigidek (gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.

Snacks and tasty delights
Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty delights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco*, baskets, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more. These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun.

*ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao
*Pan di ham: Derived from the Venezuelan Pan de Jamon (rolled up bread with ham, raisins and olives)
*Saco: Saco literally means "bag". Saco contains fried potatoes, plantains, chicken (and ribs) and a Johnny cake, served in a paper bag.❑

Source: Voeding, voedingsgewoonten en gerechten op Aruba (Nutrition, Food Traditions and Dishes on Aruba) by Biblioteca Nacional Aruba

Conchi:Aruba's hidden natural pool

(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there is an additional "hidden" natural pools that is situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary. This is Conchi.

Conchi (Natural Pool)
For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known "Cura di Turtuga (Turtle's Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4×4 vehicle or by foot if you're up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get permission from park management to enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you've completed that, you are set!
If you decide to hike from the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and enough water and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It's also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

Fun fact: "Conchi" means small bowl in Papiamento. Once you get there, you may see why we call it that.❑

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ARUBA TODAY

CROSSWORD

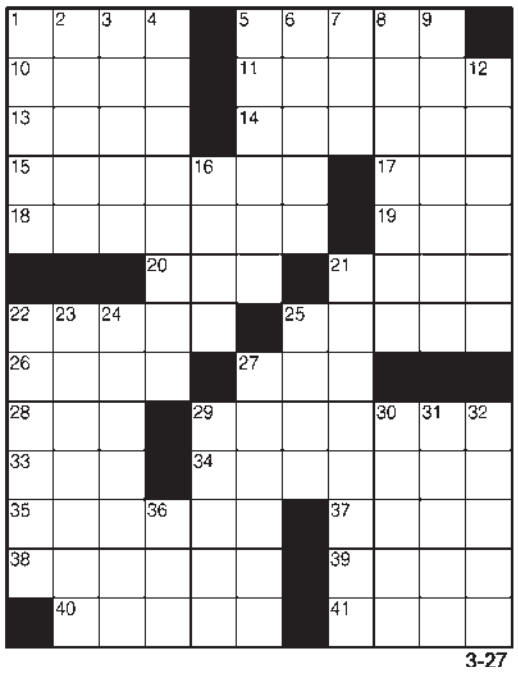
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Highway exit
5 Old poets
10 On the ocean
11 Ark's landing site
13 Relaxing resorts
14 Prof's protection
15 Emotional strain
17 Hosp. workers
18 Dish, perhaps
19 Cambridge sch.
20 Distress signal
21 Painter Magritte
22 Take, as advice
25 More tender
26 Murder
27 Computer heart, for short
28 Period
29 Black eyes
33 Reggae's forerunner
34 Vine growth
35 Court sport
37 Rescue
38 Set straight
39 Not new
40 Edinburgh natives
41 Household animals

DOWN

1 Dreadlocks wearer
2 Rockies resort
3 Intended
4 Forwards
5 Conductors' needs
6 Sports spot
7 Sprinted
8 Ringo, for one
9 Fish in a can
12 Fragrance counter bottle
16 Privy to
21 Brings together
22 Augments
23 Slow pots
24 Ship in 1912 headlines
25 Whirl
27 Bureaus
29 Brief job
30 Make blank
31 Metal fastener
32 Luges
36 "The Matrix" hero



3-27

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-27 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

VTFJF'Q BUV M NMB, CUNMB UJ ETLHW UB VTF OMEF UO VTF FMJVT CTU WUFQB'V FBYUI M VMQVI AFSFJMXF.

— WMSLW HFVVFJNMB

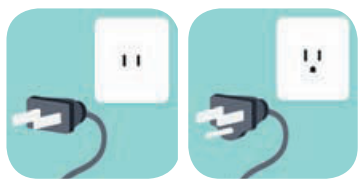
Cryptoquote: NO PROBLEM IS SO FORMIDABLE THAT YOU CAN'T WALK AWAY FROM IT. — CHARLES M. SCHULZ

Cruise ship Schedule: March 09 - 15 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	09	BRITANNIA	07.00	18.00	B	1
		MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1
		CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	08.00	22.00	I	1
TUE	10	SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	13.30	22.30	C	1
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
WED	11	CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE	07.00	17.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
THU	12	BRILLANCE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	B	1
		OCEANIA ALLURA	11.00	23.00	C	1
SUN	15	STAR PRIDE	06.00	18.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

9					4		7	
	5			9				4
	6						9	
	2			5			3	7
		4				2		9
			7		1			6
1	3						4	
		5						
		2		1	7			

Difficulty: ★★★★ 3/14

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Answer to previous puzzle

4	9	2	6	8	5	1	3	7
3	7	1	9	2	4	8	5	6
8	5	6	7	1	3	9	2	4
5	8	4	2	9	1	6	7	3
9	1	3	5	7	6	4	8	2
6	2	7	3	4	8	5	1	9
2	6	8	1	3	9	7	4	5
7	4	9	8	5	2	3	6	1
1	3	5	4	6	7	2	9	8

Difficulty: ★★★★ 3/13

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Funny old world: the week's offbeat news

A man holds a Lego shopping bag as people make their way through Herald Square on December 11, 2025 in New York City.

Paris, France

(AFP)—From Lego going to war to the dangers of not double checking... Your weekly roundup of offbeat stories from around the world.

Only 399 miles out

You have to feel sorry for the Barcelona fan who made the long trek to England to watch his football team play Newcastle in the Champions League only to discover he had turned up at the wrong St James' Park.

Instead of the legendary home of the Magpies in the northeast, he found himself the lone Barca fan outside St James' Park in Exeter at the other end of England, nearly 600 kilometres and a world away in footballing prestige.

"My guess is he'd put St James Park in his phone and then just followed the directions from there," said an Exeter City club official.

"He was pretty gutted and a bit embarrassed. So we sorted him out a ticket" and he watched Exeter lose 0-1 to Lincoln City.

But his trip may not have been completely in vain. A chain of British opticians is trying to track him down so he can star in one of their ads.

Lego goes to war

Parents know the pain Lego can inflict when you stand on it, so we shouldn't be surprised that Tehran has turned it into a weapon of war.

With the US and Israel pounding the Islamic Republic, Iran hit back with an AI spoof of "The Lego Movie" that landed more hits than a thousand drone storms.

The two-minute propaganda video, which trolls Donald Trump and Israel premier Benjamin Netanyahu, scored an avalanche of likes by turning the White House's own liberal use of AI to glorify Trump back on it.

But those who live by Lego can also die by it.

Trump supporters hit back with a chilling meme of Iran's late supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei -- killed in the first wave of strikes -- broken up into Lego bricks.

Best amigos

Even in grim times, love always finds a way.

Turkey and Spain are in the first flush of a wartime romance after Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez refused to let the US use Spanish bases to attack Iran, repeatedly posting "No to the war".

Turks swooned at his defiance of Donald Trump's threat to cut all trade, with football fans chanting "Ole!"

Social media has been replete with love-in memes, one depicting wolves -- representing Turkey -- chasing off the jackals (the US and Israel) attacking the proud Spanish bull.

Spain's reputation was further burnished when its troops manning an interceptor battery in Turkey helped take out an inbound missile from Iran.

Leave no clutter

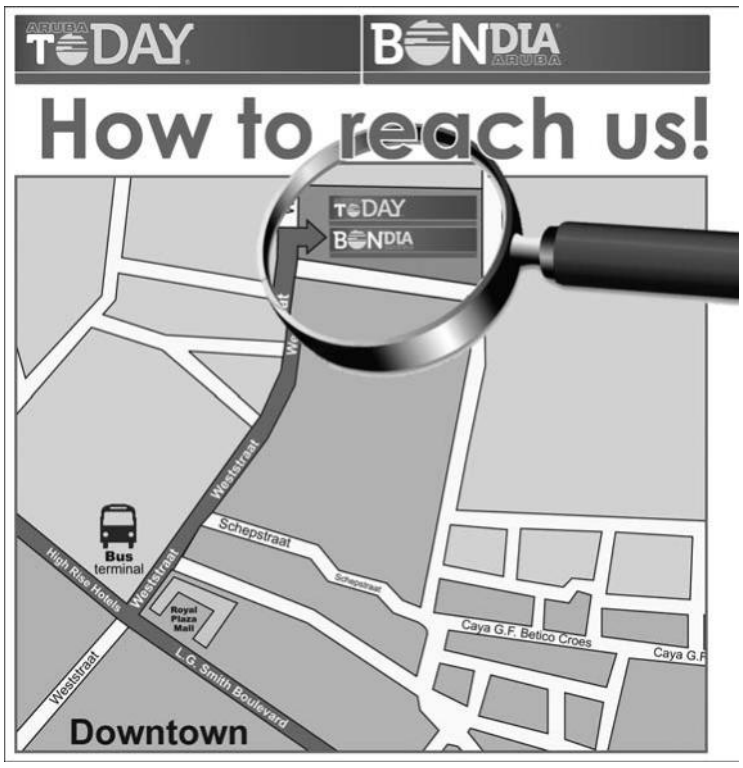
To Sweden, the country which filled our homes with IKEA furniture, but also came up with the concept of "death cleaning" -- getting rid of stuff as you age to spare your loved ones when you pass.

Margareta Magnusson, the author who took the idea global with the bestselling book, "The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning: How to Free Yourself and Your Family from a Lifetime of Clutter", passed herself this week with all the lightness of being that she had preached.

"If you went to her house, you always left with something to take home," her daughter Jane said.

"You had to be careful not to say, 'What a nice cushion' because then she'd try to give it to you," she said with a laugh.

Thanks to her mother's death cleaning, "I don't need to lift a finger", Jane said. "Mum had nothing in the attic, nothing in the cellar" but her place was "still very cozy".❑



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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

AI agent 'lobster fever' grips China despite risks

Beijing, China

Chinese entrepreneur Frank Gao used to spend long hours running his social media accounts but now outsources the chore to AI agent tool OpenClaw, which is taking the country by storm despite official warnings over cybersecurity.

OpenClaw, created in November by an Austrian coder, differs from bots like ChatGPT because it can execute real-life tasks such as sending emails, organising files or even booking flight tickets.

"Since January, I've spent hours on the lobster every day," Gao told AFP, referring to OpenClaw's red crustacean mascot. "We're family."

After downloading OpenClaw, users connect it to existing artificial intelligence models of their choice, then give it simple instructions through instant messaging apps, as if to a friend or colleague.

The tool has fascinated tech circles worldwide but particularly in China, gripping tech-savvy companies and individuals keen to keep up with the next big thing in AI.

Hundreds of people queued at tech giant Baidu's Beijing headquarters this week for an OpenClaw event where engineers helped attendees set up their "little lobsters".

A man holds a placard featuring OpenClaw, an open-source AI assistant in Beijing on March 11, 2026.

It was one of many similar meetups to experiment with the tool, which are drawing crowds from Shanghai to Shenzhen.

Some municipalities, including the eastern cities of Wuxi and Hangzhou, have pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the adoption and development of OpenClaw and other AI agents.

But the lobster fever, as it has been dubbed, has also sparked security concerns.

"What's truly scary about agents like OpenClaw is this: once they have your digital keys, they can theoretically access all the services you've authorised, and can autonomously decide when to activate them," Gao warned.

"The attacker effectively gains a 'master key' to your digital identity," said the engineer, who has named his OpenClaw agent "Q" after his business name QLab.

- 'Use with caution' -

Chinese national cybersecurity authorities and Beijing's ministry of industry and IT have warned of the risks of OpenClaw hacks.

"Use intelligent agents such as 'lobster' with caution," national IT research institute expert Wei Liang advised government agencies, public institutions, companies and individuals in a message on state media.

The mixed signals of rolling out policy incentives while issuing warnings "reflects the authorities' cautious tolerance towards 'lobster fever'," Zhang Yi, founder of tech consultancy iiMedia, told AFP.

Austrian programmer Peter Steinberger, who built OpenClaw to help organise his digital life, was hired last month by ChatGPT maker OpenAI.

Meanwhile, a separate team of coders that made Moltbook, a Reddit-like pseudo social network where OpenClaw agents converse, are joining Meta.

Top Chinese tech companies have also been quick to get involved.

The likes of Tencent, Alibaba, ByteDance and Baidu are offering simplified installation and affordable coding plans to help users who want to host OpenClaw agents on their cloud servers seen as safer than downloading it onto a personal computer.

In recent days AI companies big and small have also launched their own competing agent tools, such as ByteDance's ArkClaw, Tencent's WorkBuddy and Zhipu AI's AutoClaw.

The relatively low cost for cloud deployment of OpenClaw in China, subsidised by big tech firms, is one factor behind its popularity, said Gao Rui, a senior product manager at Baidu AI Cloud.

"For most people, it's likely just the price of a cup of coffee... which is why people will probably be keen to give it a try," she told AFP.❑

Dating app Tinder dabbles with AI matchmaking

New York, United States

Tinder said Thursday that it is testing a "Chemistry" option that uses artificial intelligence to help with matchmaking in the popular dating app.

The iconic system of users "swiping" to show interest in Tinder profiles remains at the core of the service created in 2012, but AI promises a more personalized quest for romance, according to Tinder.

"We're using AI to surface more relevant connections, and continuing to raise the bar on safety so that people feel confident taking the next step," Spencer Rascoff, chief executive of Tinder and its parent Match Group, said in a statement announcing a slew of changes to the platform.

Tinder said AI enabled the app to "get a better sense of your personality; your vibe, and what really matters to you."

The tool will learn about users from information in their accounts, and Tinder plans to eventually let people augment that by answering questionnaires and providing access to photo archives, according to the company.

This illustration picture shows the logos of the dating apps Tinder and Bumble displayed on a mobile phone and a desktop screen in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on October 7, 2022.

Chemistry is among new features designed to help Tinder users spend less time in the app and more time connecting in real life, according to senior vice president of product Hillary Paine.

"What you are going to see is more of an evolution that is mirroring what modern, young daters are looking for," Paine told AFP.

A music mode lets people give greater weight to musical tastes while seeking promising profiles, while a new astrology mode makes star signs a factor in the mix.

Tinder is also testing in-person events where subscribers in its home city of Los Angeles can meet, along with virtual video speed dating sessions, according to Paine.

"We're hearing and we're seeing that Gen Z-plus wants to be social," Paine said of those born in the Internet Age.

"We're trying to get them off the couch, out of their apartments and into the real world."

Tinder is also using AI to detect potentially inappropriate messages and to scan faces to check they are actual people.❑

Alcaraz gains Norrie revenge to set up Medvedev semi at Indian Wells

Indian Wells, United States
Carlos Alcaraz extended his unbeaten season and got revenge over Cameron Norrie on Thursday to reach the semi-finals at Indian Wells for a fifth straight year.
The world number one from Spain emerged from a see-saw battle with 29th-ranked Norrie with a 6-3, 6-4 victory.
He will meet Russian Daniil Medvedev, who pushed his own ATP winning streak to eight matches with a 6-1, 7-5 victory over defending champion Jack Draper.
World number two Jannik Sinner powered past Learner Tien 6-1, 6-2 to line up a semi-final with fourth-ranked Alexander Zverev, a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Arthur Fils.
Alcaraz, 22, became the youngest player to complete a career Grand Slam with his victory in the Australian Open and followed up with a title in Qatar.
He pushed his 2026 season record to 16-0 with the win over Norrie, who beat him in the Paris Masters in November.
"I struggle a lot with his style," Alcaraz said of heavy-hitting left-hander Norrie.

Carlos Alcaraz of Spain plays a forehand against Cameron Norrie of Great Britain in their quarterfinal match of the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden on March 12, 2026 in Indian Wells, California.

"Every time I play against him it's always really tough for me.
"It's a little bit confusing with his style, his topspin forehand, super high. And then the backhand, really flat and really low."

Trailing 4-2 in the opening set Norrie broke Alcaraz at love for 4-3. Alcaraz regrouped with another break and pocketed the set in 31 minutes.
Norrie broke again for a 2-0 lead in the second, but Alcaraz won the next four games.
Norrie saved two match points on his serve before Alcaraz efficiently served out the win.
"I'm finding the right shot," Alcaraz said. "I played well. I played solid. I played aggressive when I could."
Medvedev, coming off a title run in Dubai last month, seized control early against Draper, who had pulled off a gritty win over Novak Djokovic on Wednesday night.
"The first set was unreal, I couldn't miss a ball," Medvedev said. "It was an unbelievable level.
"Second set he tried to give everything he had, and he had an opportunity," Medvedev noted, but the Russian saved the only break point he faced with an ace.

- Hindrance call -
Medvedev then secured the lone break of the second to lead 6-5.
Draper was irked early in that 11th game when the chair umpire, queried by Medvedev, ruled the Briton had caused a hindrance with a raised arm gesture during a point.
Medvedev said he was distracted and the umpire told him it could go to video review, and subsequently awarded the Russian the point.
"Was I distracted big time? No," Medvedev said, but added he thought Draper's gesture affected the quality of one of his forehands in the rally.

"Do I feel good about it? Not really," he said. "But I also don't feel like I cheated or something."
In the other half of the draw, Sinner kept his bid for a first Indian Wells title on track with a straightforward victory over 20-year-old American Tien.❑

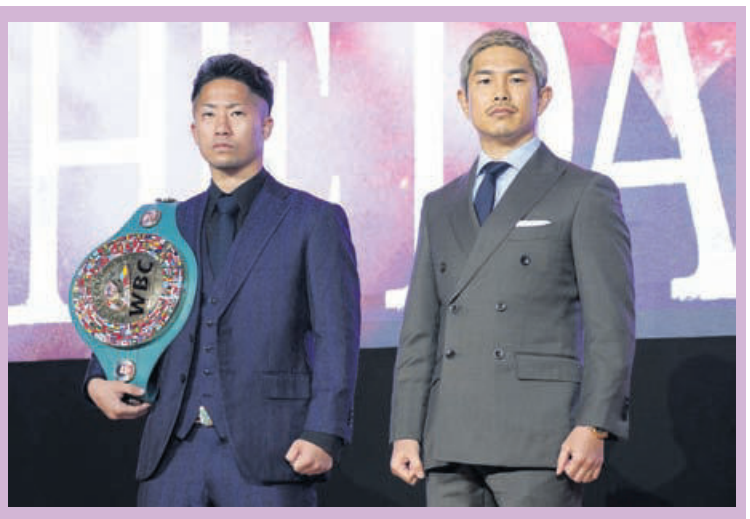
Inoue primed for 'historic' Nakatani clash in Tokyo

Tokyo, Japan
Japan's Naoya Inoue said Friday that he will have to be at his destructive best for his "historic" showdown against dangerous countryman Junto Nakatani at the Tokyo Dome in May.
Undisputed super bantamweight world champion Inoue will return to the venue where he fought in front of 55,000 fans two years ago when he takes on Nakatani on May 2.

Both fighters are unbeaten and the long-anticipated bout is expected to create huge interest in Japan and beyond.
"May 2 will be a historic day for boxing," said Inoue, who will be defending his titles for the seventh time.
"But in terms of my boxing career, I have to think of it as just a point on the way," said the 32-year-old, who has a 32-0 record, with 27 wins by knockout.
"I will prepare for the fight with that mindset."
Inoue beat Mexico's Alan Picasso in Riyadh in December in what was his fourth fight of 2025.

Nakatani beat Mexico's Sebastian Hernandez by unanimous decision on the same card in his super bantamweight debut.
The 28-year-old Nakatani said he had "taken a lot" from the fight and was now feeling more comfortable at his new weight class.

"My body has grown and I feel like I'm getting more adjusted, so from here I want to discuss tactics and the game plan with my team," said Nakatani, who has a 32-0 record with 24 KOs.
"I want to hone things and get fully ready."
Inoue will return to the Tokyo Dome for the first time since he knocked out Mexico's Luis Nery there in May 2024.
He said he was "tired" after beating Picasso in Saudi Arabia but the man known as "Monster" promised he would be ready for Nakatani.
"I have to raise the level of every aspect of my boxing, otherwise I can't bring out the best version of myself," said Inoue.



WBC bantamweight champion Takuma Inoue (L) and Japanese boxer Kazuto Ioka pose during a photo session at the a press conference in Tokyo on March 6, 2026.

"First of all I have to make sure this is the best fight I've ever had."
Nakatani was given a tough lesson in the realities of the super-bantamweight division in his bout against Hernandez.
He did enough to emerge with the win after tiring in the second half of the fight, and he knows he will have to improve against Inoue.
"He's the best fighter, so I need to be at my best when I fight him," said Nakatani.❑

Gilgeous-Alexander breaks Chamberlain's NBA record 20-point streak

Washington, United States

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander broke the NBA record for consecutive 20-point games by delivering his 127th in a row on Thursday in Oklahoma City's 104-102 home win over the Boston Celtics.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points on sizzling 13-of-18 shooting from the floor, including 2-of-5 from three-point range, and 7-of-8 from the free throw line while adding nine assists, six rebounds, three blocks and two steals.

"All the records and accomplishments are great, but they don't matter if you don't win and that's all that was on my mind," Gilgeous-Alexander said.

"I would have given the record for the W any day of the week. I'm glad we won and I got the record."

The reigning NBA Most Valuable Player eclipsed the 63-year-old mark of 126 set by NBA legend Wilt Chamberlain when he sank a 20-foot jump shot from the top of the key with 7:04 remaining in the third quarter.

That gave the 27-year-old Canadian guard 21 points for the game and lifted the reigning NBA champion Thunder level with Boston at 69-69.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander #2 of the Oklahoma City Thunder attempts to drive past Lj Cryer #18 of the Golden State Warriors during the second half at Paycom Center on March 7, 2026 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The game was decided by Chet Holmgren's two free throws with 0.8 of a second remaining after being fouled on a rebound, which gave the Thunder the final margin.

Boston had a final chance but Payton Pritchard missed a shot at the buzzer.

The Thunder improved to an NBA-best 52-15 with their seventh consecutive victory, dropping the Celtics to 43-23.

"I've been trying to reach my ultimate goal, which is hoisting the trophy," Gilgeous-Alexander said.

"Because that's all I focus on, everything else takes care of itself. I look up and I've accomplished a few things."

Gilgeous-Alexander's streak began on November 1, 2024, and since then he has averaged 35.5 points and shot 53.5 percent.

In the streak, Gilgeous-Alexander has delivered all five of his career 50-point games, 18 40-point performances and 85 30-point games.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 17 points in the first half, putting himself on the brink of NBA history as the second half began.

He missed a three-point attempt but was later fouled on a drive to the basket and made two free throws to pull within one point of the milestone, setting the stage for his breakthrough basket.

Gilgeous-Alexander was unhappy with only 10 points in the first quarter.

"I was having a terrible game to that point," he said.

"I didn't like how I started. I started sluggish. I wanted to focus on getting the car back on the road and make sure we walked out of here with a W."

In other games, Victor Wembanyama was sidelined by a sore right ankle for the San Antonio Spurs, which spoiled a big-man matchup with Denver's Nikola Jokic, who had a triple double with 31 points, 20 rebounds and 12 assists in the Nuggets' 136-131 victory.❑

XDS Astana Team's Colombian rider Harold Tejada celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 6th stage of the Paris-Nice cycling race, 179.3 km between Barbentane and Apt, on March 13, 2026.

Tejada enjoys first big win as Vingegaard keeps Paris-Nice lead

Apt, France

Colombian climber Harold Tejada attacked 4.5 kilometres from the finish in Apt on Friday to win the sixth stage of the Paris-Nice cycling race as Jonas Vingegaard retained a comfortable lead.

Vingegaard, who rides for Visma-Lease a Bike, holds a 3min 22sec lead over Colombian Dani Martinez of Red Bull–Bora–Hansgrohe heading into the last two days, with Saturday's stage in the Alps curtailed because of bad weather.

"They're forecasting a lot of snow. We'd all like to reach the summit, but maybe it's just not possible," said Vingegaard.

On Friday, Lenny Martinez attacked on the final climb, but Tejada, who had chased on after mechanical issues, counter-attacked over the summit.

He held off the Frenchman on the descent to the finish line in Apt at the end of a 179.3 km stage from Berbentane, south of Avignon.

"I'm very grateful to my teammates because I had a lot of problems with my bike," Tejada said at the finish.

He said Astana team manager Alexander Vinokourov, a former Paris-Nice winner, "advised me to be ready to jump over the top of the climb and on the downhill that followed and that's exactly what I did".

The 28-year-old gained only his second career win as he finished six seconds clear of Frenchman Dorian Godon of Ineos at the head of a charging pack of sprinters.

Tejada's only previous victory was in the Tour of Colombia two years ago.❑